

## Panchayati Raj and Women Empowerment

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### ABSTRACT

Panchayati Raj was widely accepted because it meant government through mutual consultation, consent, and consensus. It fit right in with India's ancient cultural patterns. The passage of the 73rd amendment by Parliament in 1992 had the potential to usher in genuine democracy at the grassroots village level. This experiment is proving to be a huge success, especially in terms of allowing women to come out of their homes and participate in administrative and political fields. It must be considered that including well-qualified women in village Panchayats at the outset of the Panchayati Raj Institution's interlocution in rural areas would be a vital instrumental measure in planning for improving the social status and empowering women.

**Keywords:** Panchayati Raj, Parliament, Empowering women.

### 1. Introduction

*"Woman is the architect of a nation's destiny." Despite being as delicate and soft as a lily, she has a heart far stronger and bolder than that of a man. She is the supreme source of inspiration for man's onward march."* - Tagore, Rabindranath.

Panchayati Raj has made rural development and women's empowerment possible in India. Panchayati Raj was widely accepted because it meant government through mutual consultation, consent, and consensus. It fit right in with India's ancient cultural patterns. The passage of the 73rd amendment by Parliament in 1992 had the potential to usher in genuine democracy at the grassroots village level. It represented a once-in-a-generation opportunity to change the face of rural India.

The amendment mandates that resources, responsibility, and decision-making power be devolved from the central Government to rural grassroots people through Panchayati Raj Institutions. Their main objective was to realize Mahatma Gandhi's dream of reaching power to the people through Panchayats. Philosophically, Panchayati Raj is a multidimensional idea. It has its pluralistic definitions and wider connotations in the writings of different thinkers, emphasizing the ideology of Panchayati Raj Gandhi viewed, "India lives in her village. Independence must begin at the bottom, thus making every village a republic or Panchayati, enjoying full powers". He particularly envisaged and envisioned the concept of Gram Swaraj along with Purna Swaraj. Gandhi Ji aptly remarked that independence must begin at the bottom. And it is to emphasize that women's empowerment should also start from the villages, the grass-root level units.

### 2. Objectives of the Study

- (1) To explain the emancipation of women in society as a result of the Panchayati Raj.
- (2) To study the role of Panchayati Raj in women's empowerment.
- (3) To study the impact of Panchayati Raj on rural women's politics.

### **3. Women's Political Empowerment**

Women's empowerment in all spheres, particularly politics, is critical for their advancement and the establishment of a gender-equal society. It is critical to achieving the goals of equality, development, and peace. The Indian democracy, which had been in existence for more than a half-century, had entered the twenty-first century. However, a large number of women are still kept out of the political arena. Without equal and proportional participation of men and women at various levels of decision-making, there can be no true democracy or true people's participation in governance and development.

Women's political participation is critical to their advancement. Women's primary roles in societies around the world are to cook food, care for children, and run the household. Social norms and values differ across societies. In some societies, both men and women have distinct roles and responsibilities. Only the productive role of women is recognized in the majority of developing countries. Women are unable to participate in the public sphere of life in such circumstances. As a result, cultural factors limit women's political participation.

Women's political participation may be influenced by institutional factors as well. Women's participation can be increased by using an electoral system with more seats per district and a proportional formula for allocating seats. Another important institutional device that can ensure a minimum number of female legislators is the quota system. Women are transforming Indian governance. They are being elected to local councils in unprecedented numbers as a result of constitutional amendments mandating the reservation of seats for women in Panchayati Raj Institution system local governments (PRI). Women brought into politics by the PRI are now ruling, whether in a single village or a larger area such as 100 villages or a district. This process of restructuring the national political and administrative system began in January 1994, so it is too early to assess the impact of women's entry into formal government structures.

### **4. Panchayati Raj and Women**

Women's political empowerment begins with their active participation in political institutions. Women's participation in Panchayati Raj Institutions is important at the grassroots level of democracy. Even though women have some reservations about local bodies in today's political system, this has been abused by some, i.e. women have been used as rubber stamps. Their male family members make the final decisions. Women may have stormed the male bastion under the Panchayati Raj system, but in many cases, it is their husbands or male family members who make the decisions.

According to reports, elected female representatives have been reduced to acting as proxies for their male relatives. Such de facto rules by male counterparts must be checked, and women must be given due consideration in PRLs. The change incorporated in the Panchayati Raj Institution demonstrates the political system and decision-making process. The goal of improving women's socioeconomic conditions can only be achieved by taking appropriate initiatives and measures to empower them. Women's empowerment will be impossible unless they are properly represented in the political system. This goal should be achieved at the desired level by making provisions for linking and associating the greatest number of women in political affairs, even at the most basic level of political activity.

## 5. Initiatives to Increase Women's Active Participation in PRIs

The following initiatives and training programs must be implemented to increase women's participation and decision-making in PRIs. Measures must be implemented to increase the number of women participating in governance. The elected leaders of these institutions must be literate to guide and inform the villagers about the various provisions of the PR Act.

Literacy is important in educating rural women and in learning about the governance system. As a result, steps to improve female literacy, particularly in rural areas, are urgently needed. Women's leadership and communication skills must be developed to increase social mobilization. Essentially, to train them, find ways and means to interface with other layers of local self-governance within the state, and claim the Panchayat's entitlements.

Familiarize them with the state and federal governments' rural/women/child development programs. In terms of planning, such as scheme selection and placement, there should be no factions or party politics; rather, genuine project implementation is required to strengthen decentralized planning. Enable them to identify and overcome cultural barriers to improve their socioeconomic situation. Systematic awareness is required to improve rural women's capacity to assume their new roles as local legislators.

Furthermore, literature on the various provisions of rural development should be provided to Panchayati leaders as well as common villagers so that they are more familiar with their functions and various development schemes. Furthermore, all rural development program guidelines should be made available to Panchayati leaders and ordinary villagers. Women Panchayati members should be trained based on their local experience, and their participation in developing a framework that will allow them to analyze and understand their roles and responsibilities by the 73rd Constitutional Amendment should be encouraged.

## 6. Conclusions

With the establishment of PRIs in our country, a woman now has the opportunity to demonstrate her value as a good administrator, decision-maker, or leader. In this regard, the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act of 1992 is a watershed moment. It gives women the opportunity to speak up. This experiment is proving to be a huge success, especially in terms of allowing women to come out of their homes and participate in administrative and political fields. It must be considered that including well-qualified women in village Panchayats at the outset of the Panchayati Raj Institution's interlocation in rural areas would be an important instrumental measure in planning for improving the social status and empowering women.

Women make up half of our country's population. It is our responsibility to support women in the world's largest democracy. To give women proper status, the government, non-governmental organizations, and universities must all play important roles. This group of women, if given representation at the village Panchayati level, can strongly rise and handle issues concerning the advancement of women, play a dominant role in decision-making, and make appropriate recommendations for improving the status of women in the meeting. It gives women more power over the design and delivery of services, as well as the management of resources from which they may benefit. A large number of women compete with men in local politics, and advancing gender-related agendas is seen as a step toward gender equity.

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### ***Competing Interests Statement***

*The authors declare no competing financial, professional and personal interests.*

### ***Consent for publication***

*Authors declare that they consented for the publication of this research work.*

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